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TAGS: PREL TH VM
SUBJECT: THAI PRIME MINISTER BRIEFLY VISITS VIETNAM

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 26, Thailand's interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont met with GVN leaders on a whirlwind visit that was part of a round of courtesy calls to Southeast Asian neighbors. PM Chulanont told his GVN interlocutors that Thailand's "recent situation" had returned to normal and that the Thai leadership is "actively preparing" to draft a new constitution. He also informed State President Nguyen Minh Triet that a general election is scheduled to take place by the end of next year. According to the PM, the RTG's two priorities are to settle Thailand's domestic political situation and to combat the violence occurring in the south. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) PM Chulanont's visit to Vietnam was one in a series of visits to Thailand's neighbors that took place following the interim PM's taking office. According to MFA Asia II (Southeast Asia) Department Thailand Desk Officer Nguyen Trung Kien, PM Chulanont's arrival in Vietnam was an hour behind schedule due to aircraft problems and a switch to commercial air. As a result, his meeting with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dzung was cut to a brief 35 minutes. During their meeting, the two Prime Ministers weren't able to "cover a lot of issues," but they expressed satisfaction with the growing relationship between their countries. They agreed to encourage bilateral cooperation mechanisms, including through regular meetings of cabinet ministers, a joint committee on economic, cultural and science and technology cooperation, and future (unspecified) agreements on political security and foreign affairs. They also agreed to boost economic cooperation, with a goal to increase two-way trade to USD five billion within a few years, up from USD three billion in 2005.

¶3. (SBU) During his call on Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) General Secretary Manh, PM Chulanont encouraged the GVN to continue with its

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economic reforms in the interest of building a "rich and strong Vietnam." General Secretary Manh reaffirmed the GVN's policy of encouraging bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

¶4. (SBU) In a separate meeting, State President Nguyen Minh Triet praised Thailand's role as a proponent of regional initiatives, citing its efforts in the Mekong Sub-Region and the East-West Corridor. He also noted the potential of their respective countries to contribute to the region's dynamic development. PM Chulanont said Thailand's "recent situation" had returned to normal and that the Thai leadership is "actively preparing" to draft a new constitution. A general election is scheduled to take place by the end of next year. The RTG's two priorities are to settle Thailand's domestic political situation and to combat the violence occurring in the south, said PM Chulanont. The PM also received a briefing at the Ministry of Planning and Investment covering the economic situation in Vietnam and the GVN's investment policy.

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